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SUBJECT: SLOVAK EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE EFFORTS

1. SUMMARY. THE SLOVAK MFA RECENTLY ESTABLISHED A FORMAL INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM TO MANAGE EFFORTS THAT HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. THE PROGRAM OF OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA) STARTED ADMINISTRATIVELY IN 2003, AND ACTUAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS WILL COMMENCE THIS YEAR. DUE TO RELATIVELY MODEST FUNDING, THE ODA WILL PARTNER WITH ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO MINIMIZE ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES. IT HAS A WELL-DEFINED LIST OF PRIORITIES AND 13 TARGET COUNTRIES FROM EUROPE, AFRICA, AND ASIA IN WHICH IT WILL OPERATE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN ORDER TO MORE EFFECTIVELY MEET ITS MORAL RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN OECD MEMBER AND BURGEONING PARTICIPANT IN EURO-ATLANTIC STRUCTURES, THE GOS ESTABLISHED ITS ODA IN 2003 WITH A BUDGET OF USD 4.2 MILLION. THIS BUDGET SHOULD GROW TO APPROXIMATELY USD 4.8 MILLION THIS YEAR IN ADDITION TO THE USD 9 TO 12 MILLION THE GOS ANNUALLY GIVES FOR HUMANITARIAN PURPOSES. THE KEY DIFFERENCE IS THAT THE ODA CREATES A MECHANISM FOR FORMAL PROGRAMS IN TARGETED COUNTRIES. IT ALSO EMPHASIZES RELATIVE SLOVAK STRENGTHS IN MANAGING DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSITION.

3. ZIGMUND BERTOK, DIRECTOR OF THE MFA'S DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION, DISCUSSED DETAILS OF THE ODA WITH ECONOFFS. HE AMBITIOUSLY CLAIMED THAT SLOVAKIA IS ON THE PATH TO BECOMING ONE OF THE WORLD'S HIGHLY DEVELOPED COUNTRIES. HE ADDED THAT, IN ADDITION TO THE GOS BEING KEENLY AWARE OF HOW CAREFULLY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MONITORS PARTICIPATION IN SUCH PROGRAMS, IT ALSO WANTED TO ALTRUISTICALLY HELP THE DEVELOPING WORLD GROW ACCORDING TO ITS MEANS. WITH LIMITED RESOURCES, HOWEVER, THE GOS DOES NOT WANT TO SEE ITS DONATIONS DISPERSED SO WIDELY THAT EFFICIENCY IS SACRIFICED.

4. THEREFORE, THE ODA WILL FOCUS ITS EFFORTS ON 13 COUNTRIES WITH TWO OR THREE OF THEM SELECTED AS "PROGRAM" COUNTRIES FOR MORE COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS. THE 13 FUTURE RECIPIENT COUNTRIES INCLUDE AFGHANISTAN, ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, KAZAKHSTAN, KENYA, KYRGYZSTAN, MACEDONIA, MONGOLIA, MOZAMBIQUE, SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO, SUDAN, TAJIKISTAN, AND UZBEKISTAN. THE GOS SELECTED SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO AS THE INITIAL RECIPIENT OF PROGRAM ASSISTANCE AND OTHER COUNTRIES WILL BE ADDED LATER. ADDITIONALLY, SLOVAKIA HAS DESIGNATED IRAQ FOR IN-KIND ASSISTANCE SUCH AS OFFERING A "MINISTERIAL ADVISOR" AND PARTICIPATING IN TRAINING TO SHARE ITS OWN TRANSITION EXPERIENCES.

5. RECOGNIZING THAT IT WILL NOT BE A MAJOR DONOR IN QUANTITATIVE TERMS, THE GOS HAS ESTABLISHED CLEAR GOALS TO ENSURE THE QUALITY OF ITS PROGRAMS. THE GOS PLANS TO USE ITS EXPERIENCE IN THE TRANSITION TO, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF, DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND A MARKET ECONOMY (INCLUDING CHANGES IN OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE, CREATING A BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT, AND REFORMS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR). THE SLOVAKS HAVE EXPERTISE IN DEVELOPING INFRASTRUCTURE INCLUDING TRANSPORTATION, DEMINING WORKS, SEWAGE SYSTEMS, WATER PURIFICATION AND TREATMENT, WASTE MANAGEMENT, DRINKING WATER SYSTEMS, AND ENERGY PRODUCTION. THEY ARE ALSO WELL VERSED IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, AGRICULTURE, FOOD SAFETY, REFORESTATION, IRRIGATION SYSTEMS, AND AGRICULTURAL AND GEOGRAPHIC RESEARCH. THE GOS SEEKS TO INCREASE THE INVOLVEMENT OF SLOVAK EXPERTS IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS, AND HOPES DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE WILL INCREASE ECONOMIC TIES WITH RECIPIENT COUNTRIES. FINALLY, THE GOS WANTS TO AID COUNTRIES WHERE ETHNIC SLOVAKS RESIDE TO ENSURE THEIR EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS. FOR EXAMPLE, SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO WAS CHOSEN AS THE FIRST PROGRAM COUNTRY BECAUSE THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 60,000 ETHNIC SLOVAKS LIVING IN THE REGION.

6. SLOVAKIA'S ODA WILL ACTIVELY SEEK TO COOPERATE WITH NGOS AND OTHER DONORS - IN PARTICULAR THE CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY AND THE UN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM - TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR RESOURCES AND ACCESS TO FUNCTION MORE EFFICIENTLY. THEREFORE, SLOVAKIA WILL HAVE RELATIVELY FEWER PEOPLE ON THE GROUND WORKING IN RECIPIENT COUNTRIES, BUT ITS CONTRIBUTIONS WILL STILL BE CONSIDERABLE. COMMENT: SLOVAKIA'S EFFORTS IN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE WILL COMPLEMENT ITS ALREADY CONSIDERABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO PEACEKEEPING FORCES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.
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